CHAPTER IX

1850–1851

When the master of the horse rides abroad, the dogs in the village bark, but he rides on his way all the same.—CARLYLE.

We are told much of the tyranny of the strong over the weak, but believe me this is far exceeded by the tyranny of the weak over the strong.—ARTHUR HELPS.

MILLAIS, with keen remembrance of the sacred earnestness and the high aspiration with which he had designed and painted his picture of "Christ in the Home of his Parents," had undoubtedly a momentary shock when, after a pause which he had hoped would enable him to see it from an outside standpoint, he arrived before it to pronounce sudden judgment upon its general aspect. What original maker has not been dejected at finding that a sincere effort, when seen after an interval, does not reach his sublimest expectations? expectations, indeed, no more to be satisfied than infinite space can be measured. Millais had not had time on seeing his last work at the Exhibition to settle his mind to the peaceful level of an impartial registrar; but when the standard of requirements was reduced not only to the humanly attainable, but even down to the accepted grade of the day, and was dishonoured on that scale, he recognised the condemnation to be none other than the inspiration of personal jealousy and party interest. This conviction, forced upon both of us, brought no thought of surrender in either, but rather the disposition to be the more unflinching.

We had hoped in eager enthusiasm to arouse by our venture an unexpected joy in the eyes of men possessed with a keen sense of the sweet wealth of nature, but who had grown apathetic to art because, in those respects most dear in their regard, it was uninterpretive, and because —formed in a mould unchanged for centuries—it had become monotonous and exhausted. But affluent connoisseurs, whatever their independent instincts might be, did not in modern England decide upon art by their own judgment, but were guided by the voice of the majority and of dealers. We had been deceived in our hope, yet we still did our part patiently. We were not altogether deluded; many artists had quite modestly set themselves to follow our example.

The reform with which we were identified was not resolved upon without a recognition of the greatness of much work done under the conventions in vogue. Our daring had been rather in the decision that these conventions had now served their purpose as swaddling clothes. Our new start was child-like in its impulse.

It was at his home when he was absent that the cruelty of the attack on Millais was most apparent. There the mother, taking the different papers and journals tremblingly in her hand, having had experience hitherto of unchequered triumph following in the wake of her brilliant son's indefatigable enthusiasm, read with little short of incredulity the insults heaped upon his young head. "Think," said she, "what other much more competent judges than these self-appointed anonymous newspaper critics have said of Jack," it was only lately that he had stamped out the pet name of Johnnie, "think what Sir Martin Archer Shee on seeing his drawings said, although he had declared before it would be preferable to be a chimney-sweeper than to take to art. 'Madam, seeing indeed that that young child did these drawings, there can be no question whatever that at any risk he should become a painter, and there is no doubt whatever that he will gain great distinction.' And what has not Jack done since? Has not

he gained all the medals? Didn't he win the Leeds prize for decorative design? And have not all the artists said to me that he was destined to be one of the greatest ever known? Did not Etty last year predict that he would be elected an R.A. at an earlier age than any one had ever been? Had these newspaper bravos said only that this point or that needed more attention, praising the pictures in other respects, there would have been at least apparent temperance in their observations, but here listen to what this man writes of the principal work: 'Its manner is a foretaste of the grave; the figure of St. Joseph is painted from a subject after having served a course of study in the dissecting room.' Then in *The Times*, after abusing you all in general terms in one issue, the critic later returns to the attack, and says of Jack's picture. 'It is, to speak plainly, revolting; it is disgusting.' Dickens tries to outdo all in savageness, writing: 'In the foreground of that carpenter's shop is a hideous, wry-necked, blubbering, red-haired boy in a night-gown who appears to have received a poke in the hand from the stick of another boy with whom he has been playing in an adjacent gutter, and to be holding it up for the contemplation of a kneeling woman, so horrible in her ugliness that (supposing it were possible for any human creature to exist for a moment with that dislocated throat) she would stand out from the rest of the company as a monster in the vilest cabaret in France, or the lowest gin shop in England.' Is that not wicked? I declare the article has the essence of malice, and is expressed so rankly that the abuse reaches the sacred personages represented, and cannot be designated as other than blasphemous. It is indeed base to study to ruin a young man in such manner. Unfortunately people are so foolish that they will be led away by it, and it will damage all of you, however much we may despise it ourselves." Thereupon the dear lady sat quite upright, and, obeying a singular habit she indulged in when irritated, drew her open hand in front of her face, and with extended forefinger traced her handsome profile from

the height of the forehead to the throat, and, recommencing, repeated the action until the point of the nose was reached, which she pressed down in her haste to follow up another movement; drawing her scarf more closely around her shoulders, holding the extremities for a moment like wings, she then wrapped them close to her breast and threw herself back in her easy chair. The father meanwhile was walking about with a cane in his hand, which he switched, making it whistle in the air, and breaking out into indignation, clenching his fist and swearing that if he knew where to find the anonymous brood of abusers he would drag them out into the street and thrash them within an inch of their lives. And in his heat he meant what he said. "Ah," continued Mrs. Millais, "the pity is he ever altered his style, he would never have provoked this outrageous malice had he not changed. His manner was admired by every one. I say let every one keep his own style. His was right for him. Yours, Hunt, is quite right for you; an excellent manner, I call it. It is the forming yourselves into so large a body and all the talking that has done the mischief. I wish that you had never had anything to do with *that* Rossetti."

"Poor Rossetti, how is he to blame in the matter?" I urged. "Jack had quite agreed upon his new course long before Rossetti came here, when in fact Rossetti was not thinking of painting at all. In the Academy Schools I am pretty certain they never spoke ten words together."

"Ah," said Mrs. Millais, "I don't like the look of him; he's a sly Italian, and his forestalling you deceitfully by sending his first picture to an exhibition, where it was seen with your joint insignia upon it, a week before the pictures by you and Jack would appear, was quite un-English and unpardonable, when you had taught him and treated him with great generosity."

When the old lady ceased the father added, "I don't admire his behaviour; he loudly indulges in insulting denunciation of persons who have the right to be treated with respect, and asserts himself generally so as to offend

people quite unnecessarily. Moreover, I agree with my wife, his forestalling you in the exhibition of your first pictures, and his letting out of the P.R.B. secret to Munro, was quite unpardonable, and most injurious to the public understanding of your purpose. I am convinced that he makes you many enemies."

"Well," I said, "his conduct with Munro was certainly wrong, but I persuade myself that Rossetti did not steal a march upon us designedly. Rossetti, it is certain, does not hide all his faults; you cannot long remain indifferent to the need of guarding yourself from his rashness, but he has the redeeming grace of genius, so that with common-sense and justice to himself and others, he cannot but make a mark in the world."

The father replied, "I know that you and Jack thought his first picture very good, and of course I could see it was excellent; but it was such an easy design to work out, and yet you had great difficulty to make him finish that. Mrs. Millais does not of course mean that Rossetti influenced you or Jack, who had painted for years, to change your styles; she thinks really that he goes about stirring up ill-feeling towards your principles of art, without doing his part to justify the reform you attempt, and people assume the Rossetti Gothicism is what you are aiming at. If Jack and you had gone on your courses quietly no one would have been offended; now, all the Associate brood are stirred up as in a death struggle. Dickens is their friend, and out of good comradeship has adopted their interests. You see how effectively he uses Rossetti's revelation of the meaning of P.R.B. Dickens has committed a great wrong, and that's what I would tell him if I met him. *He* was treated kindly on his first appearance, and he should have remembered that fact." Growing warm as he thought of the whole phalanx of enemies, he walked about the room bursting forth with, "But there's *one* question I would ask. What is the purpose of this Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood? I thought there were to be seven of you; why should the fight be left only to you

and Jack? Rossetti's picture of 'The Annunciation,' whatever critics may say, is undoubtedly very dainty and chaste, but the principle he carries out is not Pre-Raphaelitism as you and Jack started it. His is church traditional work with gilt aureoles and the conventionalisms of early priesthood, which we did away with at the Reformation. Jack has treated his 'Holy Family' in a strictly natural manner, and you have painted your 'Early Missionary' so, and when the subject was historical that was what, as I understood, you originally intended to do. Rossetti provokes the common-sense of the world, and you suffer his penalties as well as your own. But whatever he produces he ought to exhibit at the Academy to bear fair comparison with you, and take his full share of the fight. Who goes to the Portland Gallery to see pictures?"

I explained that his mediævalism seemed to me counter to his repeated declarations of purpose, and needed excuse, but this I found in the fact that the "Annunciation" design was a sequence to his last picture which he had made before coming under our special influence, when, in fact, he was inspired by Brown in his Overbeckian phase, and that I had assented to the choice he made of the composition because this essay in painting was scarcely at first regarded by me as more than an experiment. In both cases, however, the expressions revealed such artistic penetration, and the figures had so much individuality about them, that for initial works they seemed not outside the borders of regenerated art, seeing it was desirable to have the utmost possible variety in our combination. However, I regretted that on account of the rancour of the press, and perhaps also of the non-sale of his "Annunciation," he has finally determined never again to exhibit in public.

"Ah! that accords with my reading of his character," said Mr. Millais. "What's the good of an ally who keeps out of the fight, disowning his friends if they are beaten, and claiming part of the conquest if they win? Then what are the others about? Was not Collinson to have done wonders? Is it a sham to all but you and Jack?

The fact is they make the tumult, and raise up the whole country to destroy you. They have all the pleasure of making a fuss and playing the important, while you get the wounds."

During all this expression of honest indignation, as an accompaniment from above, a magnificent tenor voice could be heard singing to the strains of a pianoforte snatches of operas, principally *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. Suddenly the instrument stopped, but the voice still rolled out the notes as the performer descended the stairs and threw open the sitting-room door. It was the elder son, senior by two years or so to John. He was the model of untroubled good nature. As he entered he rolled his head, and without immediately ceasing his notes, burst out, "Ah, Hunt, how are you? I say, Jack and you have been catching it finely. Did you ever hear such abuse? I never did. *The Times* critic calls your pictures 'deplorable examples of perverted taste,' and entitles yours 'The *Fugitive* Druids,' and says, 'it sins by the same intolerable pedantry which seems to brave the first laws of space.'"

"My good fellow," I said, "you've come in the very nick of time to help me to plead for our reserve force. Your father thinks they should all come to the front and help us to do the fighting, or at least receive some of the blows. You see, Woolner has not been able to exhibit, Rossetti shirks the public struggle, Collinson's picture goes for nothing one way or the other, and William Rossetti is obliged to continue at his office, and so the hard knocks are for Jack and me; Charley Collins and a few other outsiders get a stray drubbing by the way. Now, if Rossetti could be roused to come more forward, by all means, say I, let him help; he might soon be a tower of strength; but don't let us be strict with the remainder; it sounds so well that there should be reinforcements in the rear. All the critics, you may depend upon it, in their hearts tremble at the thought of the awful power we have behind us. I'm persuaded now the non-fighters should be left to keep in secure shelter; moreover,

you can't make them do otherwise, and we must make the best of it. Taking the part of an invisible chorus they more mysteriously impress the unthinking public. Besides, the work of our sleeping members, if it could be produced, might be of no certain benefit. We persuaded ourselves they might take fire at our combined enthusiasm. It was an error. Leave them alone now, I say; if they should wake up later on, the effect would be less damaging to us than if they did so now. Jack, I am sure, would agree, since it is proved that the encouragement we offered them at Gabriel's initiative has failed." And so our discussion came to an end.[1]

Woolner as an established P.R.B. early made sign that he would, as far as opportunities offered, strive to strengthen our body. There was a monument to be put up to Wordsworth in Westminster Abbey, and a public competition was invited by the Committee. Woolner was persuaded that he could engage with advantage in this. Accordingly he put aside all other work to make a clay model with figures about twenty-two inches in height.

[1] On going to press I receive the following interesting information from my friend Mr. John R. Clayton :—

"I refer to an incident which took place in Rossetti's studio in Newman Street, and which, from its literary interest, you might deem worthy of reference in your book.

"At the time W. M. Rossetti was writing in *The Spectator* as a reviewer, when free from his work in the Revenue Office. This connection of his with the publishers enabled him to secure an advance copy, before publication, of Tennyson's new and mysterious volume, which excited such great interest on its announcement.

"On the night referred to, a large group of art and literary men had assembled at Rossetti's. I was of the number. After long waiting, when the clock indicated nearly midnight, there was a ring at the bell, and footsteps on the stair intensified expectation, until William burst into the room, waving the little brown cloth book over his head in triumph. It was *In Memoriam*. The volume was at once passed on to Gabriel, who then read the whole of it without faltering in his unapproachable tones and inspired interpretations, to the delight and amazement of all present, who had listened in rapt silence.

"I spoke in recent years of the incident to a friend of Tennyson, who was then still living. My friend repeated my story to Tennyson, who, as I afterwards learnt, broke out into enthusiastic pleasure in knowing thus how his work had affected a group of young men all under thirty years of age. I can understand how the incident must have touched his inner sympathies."

The poet was seated on a chair raised above side-supporting groups ; on his right was a father coercing and reproving a stubborn boy, and on the other side was a mother with a daughter in charge who was being led by example to pray. The boy was writhing in obstinate temper to get free from the father, whose pose and expression excellently portrayed determination to exercise authority and to teach submission, and the mother as obviously taught her precept. Each parent thus had a child under influence. Although unequal in parts, all was admirably conceived and worked for a rough design, and as no well-established sculptors would jeopardise their reputations and positions by submitting their work to the judgment of a Committee, probably incompetent to tell the difference between good and bad, and as no young man of mark was engaging in the competition, our friend had every right to count upon his prospects as substantial. At the season appointed Woolner sent in his model, and we all waited for the result with eagerness. On the date for the judgment it was announced that the award was postponed, and this delay was repeated, very tiresomely. In the end it was published that the decision was in favour of Thrupp, but certain of the Council had insisted that an expression of their appreciation of Woolner's design should be given him, with the avowal that the delay in the arbitration had arisen from doubt whether it would not be more just to give the commission to him, instead of to his older competitor.

This decision made a cruel difference to Woolner's immediate future. Rossetti urged him to abandon sculpture as an impracticable and hopeless career, recommending painting instead. Accordingly Woolner made an essay in oil colours of a lady floating upon a cloud (the title by me forgotten) much in the manner of the eighteenth century, but this experiment could not offer any vista of fortune, and as Bernard Smith had mooted the plan of going with the ever-increasing flow of gold-diggers to Australia, he adopted the idea, pressing me to join the small artistic company emigrating in the hope of

acquiring enough to return and pursue art without check and anxiety for "that eternal want of pence." The prospect had no temptation for me. Woolner broke up his large clay model of "The Generations," the work of many self-denying months, and took his passage for the Antipodes at once.

Ford Madox Brown was so much stirred by this discouraging circumstance that he too speculated upon the idea of leaving the country, and while thus perturbed, began his touching picture entitled "The Last of England."

Without here pretending to conclude my refutation of the extraordinary theory propounded of late that Ford Madox Brown was the teacher of our Brotherhood, I must, since it has been broached, add a few particulars, otherwise not necessary, of his real attitude towards us during our darkest trouble. His enthusiastic acknowledgment of the perfection of Millais' "Lorenzo and Isabella" was but a fitful tribute to the school, for although he took passing occasion to express sympathy with our principles, he was still radically critical. Once, when in town during the Exhibition time of 1850, I met him by chance in the street. In return to his question what I intended to take up next, I explained how, for a quarter of an hour, I had just been stopping looking at and sketching a group of unemployed lying about in a great variety of poses, with incidents, some of which were highly suggestive of the labourers in the market place at the eleventh hour. "Ah," he returned, "with your particular ideas of treatment I have no doubt you would find many admirers of a picture making the unhired labourers a set of Irishmen in knee breeches, tail coats, and top hats." Putting aside the gratuitous and unusual testiness of the remark, it struck me as most unjust, when every picture I had painted proved great regard for historical propriety. I contented myself simply by saying, "It does not appear that the admirers you speak of are very rich or encouraging," and we said no more. Still it could not be overlooked, spite of this detraction, that he

was in every day's painting, perhaps quite unconsciously, setting himself to work more exactly from Nature. It was a marked departure from contemporary German examples in favour of simplicity that he removed the wings of the Chaucer painting (perhaps at the Council's direction) when it was on exhibition, and in finishing the details of the work he showed many signs of a love of naturalness which had not appeared in his earlier work. Yet I remember dear Dicky Doyle's reluctant admission when the picture was exhibited, that "the composition was too artificial for his taste." In 1849 Doyle had passed stricture upon our two pictures in his *Pips—his Diary*, but it was not long before he became our warm supporter, and discriminated, as an increasing few others did, between our aspirations and those of the German Revivalists. Only the superficial ever spoke of Brown's picture as showing the same defiance of Academic precedent as Millais' and my works in the same Exhibition did.

To guard further against the ingenious theory of Brown's paternity I must treat of a story which has also gained currency, that we invited him to be one of the Body, and that he refused. William Rossetti writes, citing Mr. Stephens: "Madox Brown declined to join the Pre-Raphaelites (that he did decline is true) on the ground partly that he had no faith in coteries, and partly that the Pre-Raphaelites insisted upon copying from a model exactly as he or she stood, and without permitting any modification of visage, etc., to suit the picture."[1] Now, if the overture had really been made, it would have been after the Rossettis had enlisted his help to keep *The Germ* going. Nothing would surprise me less than to have it shown that Gabriel at this date conceived the idea of incorporating his first master in the Body, and even of considering that his own will would remove all obstacles.

[1] Another reason alleged for the asserted refusal of F. M. Brown to join us is that the experiment of young artists combining in fellowship had been tried in Germany and failed. Certainly the coterie he referred to was more respected by him than by us.

It is proved that about the same time, in some book given to Bernard Smith, Gabriel inscribed on its fly-leaf, "To his P.R. Brother." This naturally gave to Mr. Gordon Crawford, his nephew, the notion that Bernard Smith had been an original member, but William Rossetti himself decided that, notwithstanding this recognition by Gabriel, there was not the slightest foundation for the belief that Bernard Smith had ever been a member. Reverting to Brown, I do indeed remember some talk by Gabriel about the desirability of electing him, but at once I felt that the act would be beset with misunderstandings of the most damaging kind, and my very admiration for Brown's genius and force made these appear to be greater. We were challenging the whole profession with a daring innovation, and it had aroused an alliance of half the art world against the cause. We were intending to stand or fall by the determination to cut away all conventions not endorsed by further appeal to unsophisticated Nature. German antiquarianism, which was Brown's last form of allegiance to Continental dogma, was one of the principal enemies which we originally committed ourselves to destroy. Moreover, there was always his grim grotesqueness of invention; and there was no knowing when he would not fly some startling crotchet in his head before the eyes of the essentially mild-minded public. Why should we increase the unavoidable prejudice against originality by adding Brown's gratuitous peculiarity to our first measure of offence to the world? If after three years' struggle we had taken into our boyish ranks one seven or eight years our senior, it would have looked like an admission of weakness such as we had no mind whatever to make. I knew perfectly well that Millais would agree with me, so if I heard that Rossetti had put the question to Brown, I took good care not to propose to have it repeated officially, nor to promise any attempt to gain Millais' consent. Beyond this the proposal had no need of active opposition on our side, and William Rossetti does not say that it was brought

to the vote, which, if in Brown's favour, would certainly have evoked from us the outspoken declaration that the P.R. Brotherhood, even as a bond of good-fellowship, had become a thing of the past. Brown's letter on page 246 may be further edifying on this point.

While I was doing my utmost on small means to advance the "Claudio and Isabella," Mr. Dyce again wrote to me to offer work such as he had himself done thirty years before; it was the cleaning and restoring of the wall paintings by Rigaud at the Trinity House. He wished to know whether I would take it at one guinea per diem. I agreed, and commenced the task. The work was disagreeable enough; the paintings were imitation bas-reliefs with a dingy sky-blue background, principally occupying the cove of a large hall with no ventilation above, while below were extensive walls reeking with the fumes of constantly renewed white lead. With scrubbing-brush and flannel I worked away, for no one else could be trusted to go over the whole field of these Academic works of the master of the last century. Engaged thus for more than a week, I could only bear up with great difficulty against the poisonous fumes. Smoking recommended itself as an antidote. This gave offence, although with the building in the utmost disorder during the hottest part of the autumn vacation, I had hoped that there was small need to be punctilious about ceremony, while there was much reason to take exceptional means to fortify me for the work to be done.

The cleaning was to be only preliminary to retouching, but when it was done there was some hesitation to give me further work. After a few weeks' delay Mr. Dyce was invited to go and decide as to what was necessary; he insisted that the whole should be retouched by me, as the flues had in some places burnt away the paintings, and damp had done other injuries; but as there was then but a very restricted time for me to earn money by it, I stipulated that I should have two guineas per diem, and a guinea for an assistant to do the flat shadings on the

blue ground. This was agreed to, and Mr. F. G. Stephens accepted the post. Mr. Dyce took me back with him to the House of Lords, where he was working. He talked then of the rigour of the press against his attempts of thirty years before to introduce a severer taste in art. It was when Wilkie, Hilton, and indeed all figure painters, competent or incompetent, were drowning their canvases with asphaltum indefiniteness. Dyce, it was said, was shamefully servile, because his works resembled the quattrocentists. His retort had been that since the others imitated the cinque and sei centists, there was at least not less originality in his choice of the masters of an earlier date; "but the critics completely overwhelmed me," he added. On board the steamboat by which we made our way up the Thames I expressed my sense of the joy it must be to him to have the opportunity of exercising his powers on the state building where he was employed, and on so large a scale. I shall ever remember the sadness with which he said, "But I begin with my hair already grey."

My work now, when the fumes from wet white lead had not brought an overpowering headache, was fine fun. Father Thames, like London Bridge in the old nursery song, had to be built up again, and he had to be brought out of a fog too. I stood on a springy plank dashing away at him with large brushes, and when he had a new suit of paint from top to toe I rescued a bale of goods, a globe, a pair of compasses, three or four volumes, a triton or two, perhaps a Mercury with his caduceus, and a mermaid and merman, and I emphasised the eye of Providence for a day's work; here and there I came across the trenchant touchings of Dyce, which, if possible, I always left. A bas-relief of "Charity," on the staircase, was fortunately so far ruined that I could repaint the whole without much regard to the original outlines, and I won great praise because no one could tell from the landing, the only point whence it could be seen, that the surface was not raised. For my share in this public work—the

only one I was ever honoured with—I gained about £30, which helped to clear off my back accounts, and leave me the opportunity to make a short stage's advance on "The Measure for Measure" panel.

When I was working at Chelsea, Gabriel once brought W. B. Scott with him to my studio; I had seen him before in Cleveland Street, but in a more casual manner. The visitor from the North was a man of about thirty-five; in height he must have been fully five feet ten. He had brown hair, flowing, although not long. His regard, when talking to a new friend, was singularly penetrating and deliberate, while his speech was entertainingly syllabic and naïve, so that all the mischief that might be imagined in his Mephistophelian expression was dissipated in a breath, and I was at once hail-fellow-well-met with the newcomer. That which contributed to the arch-fiend expression was the angle formed by his eyebrows, which from their parting centre ascended sharply, and ere they deflected shot off a handsome tuft, some of the hairs of which curled downwards like young moustaches. Gabriel did a careful water-colour drawing of him at this date which, wherever it is, will prove that this new friend was in his prime both handsome and interesting. He and I spent a few pleasant hours together on the river, I pulling while he talked away. As I was sculling, Scott expressed himself as surprised at my boisterous humour, and in a slow, measured phrase said that from my works he had conceived me to be a most sedate and taciturn man. At that I laughed worse than ever, and I liked him all the more for not being offended and only inclined to think me irrepressible.

This expedition was in daylight, for Scott did not stay in town long enough to join the jaunts which sometimes took place after evening gatherings. Our taste for night expeditions was altogether Bohemian, and it was characteristic of him that Millais always declined the proposal to join in them. Yet we had good company in addition to our immediate circle. James

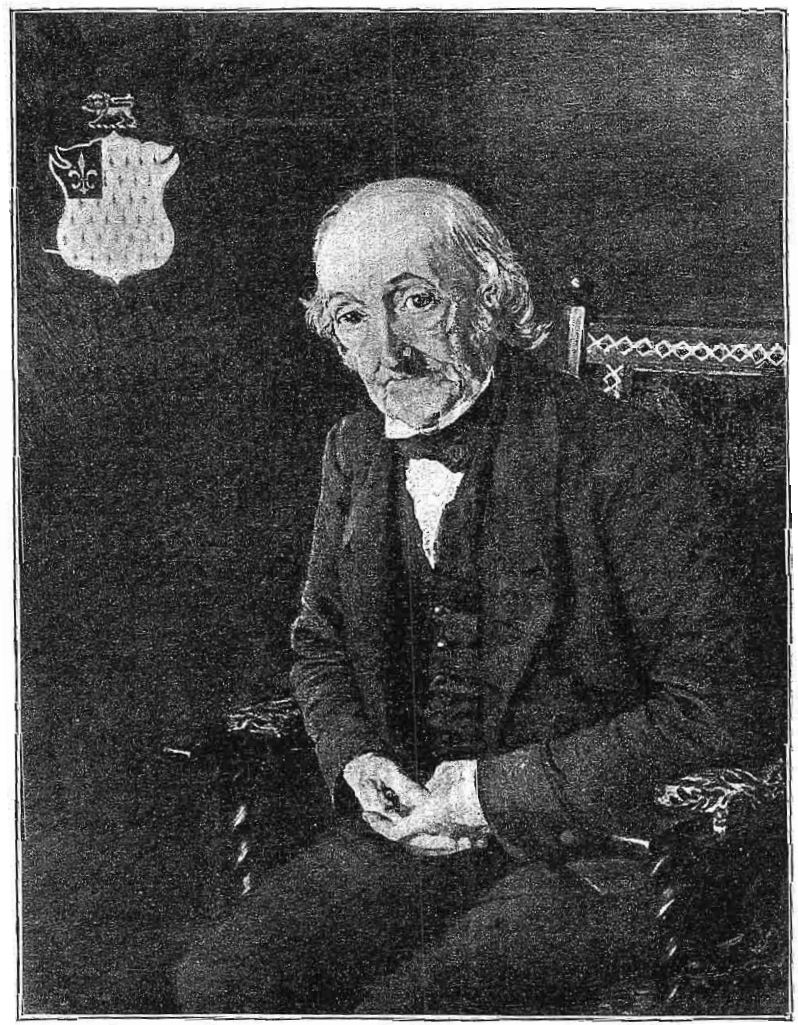
Hannay, the author of *Singleton Fontenoy*, was not such a man as could be found every day, for he was of inexhaustible spirits and had a fund of recollections of ever living words from the lips of men who had gone otherwhere. The Queen Anne and Georgian writers he quoted with unceasing zest. John Tupper and sociable Blanchard Jerrold were sometimes of the crew. Contributors to *The Germ*, with others who drifted away like "Waring," were yet good company in their day.

My "Druid" picture came back unsold and uninquired for. It is now established in the Taylor Gallery at Oxford, and it can still be seen there with some of my other works in as perfect preservation as when it left my hands in the year 1850. I can look at it now dispassionately, as though the young man who did it had been some other. I can see its shortcomings and its faults, some of them the young man saw himself without having time and means to correct them, and I can see its merits; and I can see them more clearly than the youthful workman could when he was tired out with his night and day devotion to the work, ever persevering, despite all hindrances, to express his meaning, tired, although the labour was the fascination of his life, and only dispirited, not defeated, when the world gave him not one word of encouragement or commendation. And I wonder at the little originality of taste there was among our forbears when the picture was offered to them for a beggarly sum, and they, dealers and rich men of taste alike, turned away from it with contempt. I instance this as a lesson against the artistic blindness and perversion of taste which comes from unquestioning obedience to the prevailing fashion of the day. If the position thus taken up should be looked upon as a mark of egoism, let me declare that such self-confidence was necessary at the time, and that the stormy wind sent to blow away my cloak was not at all calculated to make me leave it behind me in life.

The wisest course that I could follow at the time was to work at a few details, incomplete before, with

intention to send my picture to the Liverpool Exhibition. Indulgent Fate, however, had in store for me a means of relief from further buffetings that season. Millais and Charles Collins had been painting together at Abingdon. Mr. and Mrs. Combe of the University Press heard of them from Dr. Martin, who, to satisfy their curiosity, introduced Millais; the Oxford couple shortly after drove over to visit the artists at their work. The young painters had jocularly recounted the hard fare to which they were reduced by the uninviting cuisine of their landlady. In a few days Mr. and Mrs. Combe reappeared, their servant being armed with a tempting pie. The visitors both delighted in the perfection of the partially finished pictures, and enjoyed the buoyant spirit of the young painters. Finding the landscape was nearly completed, they invited the youths to come and continue their work in Oxford, where there were good opportunities for painting further accessories in their pictures.

At the Clarendon Press they became acquainted with Mrs. Combe's uncle, Mr. Bennett. He was a gentleman of very mature years, rich and not inconsequently inclined to indulge the caprices of old age. Mr. Combe was churchwarden of the parish, and many of the visitors at meals were clergymen. It was but occasionally that any of these stayed at table after the host, who, having no disposition to sit over his wine, habitually went away with the ladies, leaving Mr. Bennett to look after the guests. The old gentleman, as I have heard, was at times disposed to resent his host's independent and over temperate course, but he became very confidential with his convives, and more than once began his colloquy by looking around to see that there were no *black-frocked* gentlemen still in the room, and, beckoning to the remaining guests, addressed them thus: "Look ye, I don't like your priests after the order of Melchisedek, they don't suit me, and if this fashion of leaving guests alone after dinner didn't take away the priests too, I should the more dislike it. My niece's husband ought to stay to hand



C. A. Collins.

MR. BENNETT.

round the wine, but, by Jove, it is good of him to go, if otherwise the High Priests and the Levites would have to stay with him." With a deaf talker's "Eh! eh!" he went on, "Wine does a man good; it never did me any harm, you see, and I'm getting on in years. Ah, I've known lots of friends disappear because they did not put good port wine under their waistcoats. Take my advice, follow the right sort, be good fellows. Take a glass with me now. I drink to ye, gentlemen." After such avowals once he went on: "Now I tell you what, I will trust you. I want a little advice about a very delicate business. Well, ye know, I've been here several weeks, and Pat's (Mrs. Combe's pet name) husband has been very kind, although he leaves me a good deal alone. Well, well, he's a busy man. Now I have given them a deal of trouble, and I want to make them a handsome present. Now what d'ye think they'd like? That's the question. Eh?"

"Why, my dear Mr. Bennett," said Millais, "I will tell you the very thing of all others. It's Hunt's picture in the Academy. You've heard them talking about it, for they saw it at the Exhibition, and they admired it, and they've said often in your hearing they wanted to see it again. Is it not the very thing, Charley?" and Collins endorsed the opinion warmly in judicious tone. "Why," continued the first, "Hunt only wants 160 guineas, and in a few years I will undertake to say it will be worth ten or twenty times the sum."

"Do you really think so? Eh? eh?" said the old gentleman.

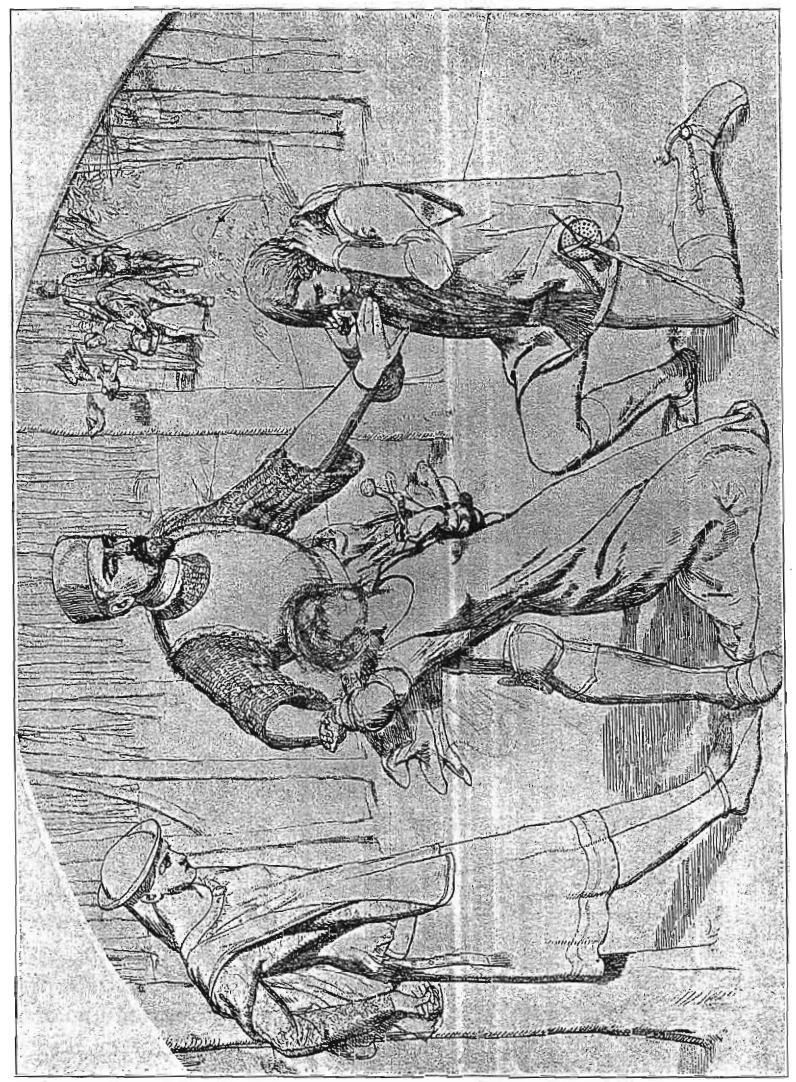
"I am sure of it," said Millais.

"But now the Exhibition is over, our friends can't see it again. What can we do? Eh? eh?"

"Why," returned Millais, "I will write to Hunt, and he'll send the picture here, and you shall see it yourself."

"Capital," nodded the old gentleman, "but don't let them know yet; keep it a secret till the painting comes."

After this momentous conference the next post



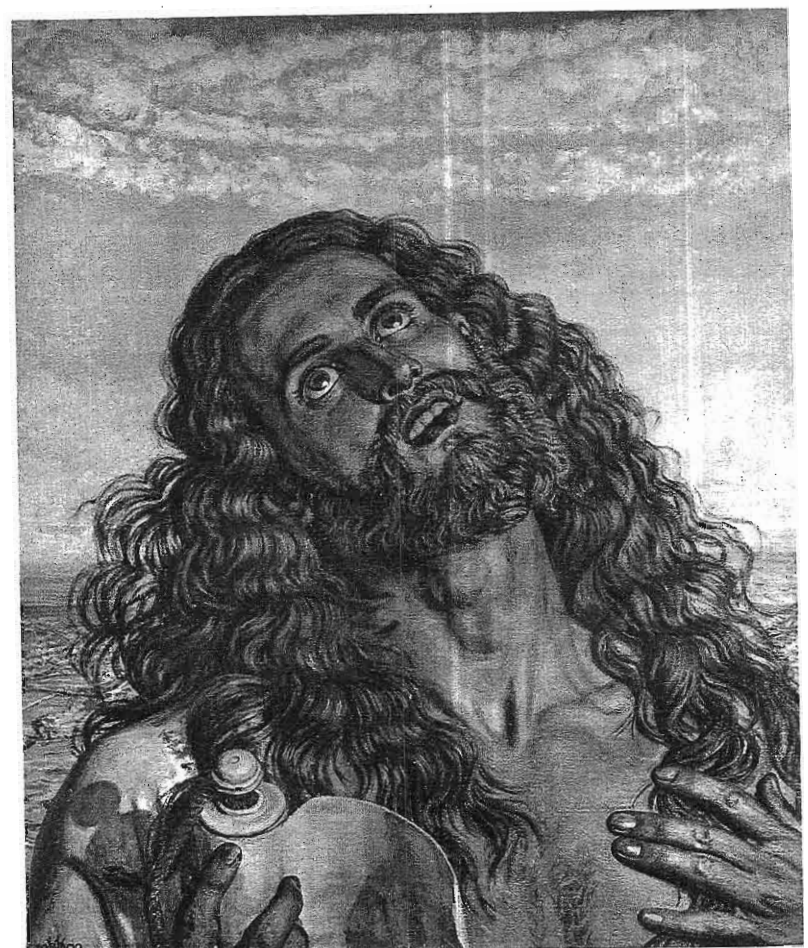
DESIGN FOR "TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA."

W. H. H.

conveyed a letter from my friend with the urgent request that the picture should be dispatched immediately, and accordingly I had it packed and forwarded. On its arrival in Oxford all was determined so speedily, that in a day or two I received a letter containing a cheque for 160 guineas signed by Mr. Combe.

It seemed from the name of the drawer of the draft that after all the purchaser was not Mr. Bennett, but I know the business began as above described. What an act of practical generosity it was that my brotherly rival thus performed! I was at the time helpless and without the prospect of carrying on the emulative competition we had entered into. How few would have had faith to recognise the chance which Mr. Bennett's passing whim afforded to benefit a friend, but he, regarding my welfare as dear to him as his own, again secured to me the opportunity of carrying on the contest with him, which, it will be seen, he continued to do until I had found my fair chance of making my effort by his side. Perhaps a clue to the non-appearance of the name of the old gentleman in the cheque may be found in the fact that once he in a testy humour told Mr. Combe that he was not considered as much as he should be, on which the latter said all his house were glad to have him as guest while he was happy there, but that if he failed to find himself so, it would be much better that he left. This outspokenness the old gentleman declared would prove to be costly, and it was afterwards said to be the reason that Mrs. Combe—who was his favourite niece—was left with no advantage over the others.

My receipt of the 160 guineas brought to a conclusion for the time a period of sore trouble, and I revelled in the peace obtained for further work. I had already made a design for the last scene in "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," for the painting of which it was necessary to find a background in nature. I settled upon this in a preliminary visit to Knole Park, and as the season was getting near "the sere and yellow leaf" it was desirable



W. Holman Hunt. pinx.t — Swan Electric Engraving Co.sc.

The Beloved.

without loss of a day to take my canvas down there and begin. Rossetti had promised to use any such opportunity to work out of doors; accordingly we took a lodging together in Sevenoaks. He had to paint a boscage as a background to a design illustrating a passage in Dante, and he found what he wanted conveniently near to my own place of work. I ran up occasionally to see him, and found him nearly always engaged in a mortal quarrel with some particular leaf which would perversely shake about and get torn off its branch when he was half way in its representation. Having been served thus repeatedly, he would put up with no more of such treatment, and left canvas, box, and easel for the man to collect when at dusk the barrow came for my picture, he stalking back to the lodgings to write and to try designs, one of these being the scene in the tent of Philip van Artevelde, with which he did not succeed in satisfying himself, and so abandoned it. He stayed on with me to the end of my work; this was protracted until dank and chilly October was far advanced, and during the time Gabriel was ever a good-humoured and pleasant companion.

When I returned to town I had to complete my work of drawing from models, and it was necessary to energise and hurriedly get together my materials for the picture, for which there was bare breathing time in any respect. Mr. W. P. Frith kindly lent me some armour, which the "slavey" in my lodging announced as a "tin waistcoat and trousers," although she had certainly not read Tom Hood, who jocularly makes a somewhat similar description of a knight's panoply.

I was fortunate enough to obtain as the model for Valentine, James Lennox Hannay, then a young barrister, and afterwards a magistrate; and for Proteus, James Aspinal, also a barrister and journalist, who eventually went to the Colonies and made a great position in the local parliament. For Julia I had the services of a very excellent young lassie. I was at no loss for Sylvia; the

beauty and grace of Miss Siddal would make her of perfect type for the duke's daughter, but I had not seen

J. E. Millais.

CHARLES ALLSTON COLLINS.

her for several months. I wrote doubtingly as to her ability to come, but one morning in the spring the young

lady appeared. I should have done more justice to my model had not circumstances occurred to hinder my work beyond all expectation.

Smith was a fellow-student whom circumstances had at frequent intervals thrown much with me; he had doubtless many merits; but devotion to diligent plodding was certainly not one. A year back he had made friends with a gentleman whose descent from one of the leading heroes of the Wars of the Roses gave him charms which dispensed with the need of humdrum virtues such as might be expected in men of less illustrious family line. I was assured by him that this friend of his, whom we may call Warwick, was the idol of his parents, although at the moment he was not in favour because he had not altogether satisfied their worldly prudence in a marriage he had chosen to make without consulting them. Since leaving College, he had in turn, simply to humour them, been a medical student, an articled clerk to the law, and a novice in a City house, whence he had chosen to be drafted to a branch house in Germany; and then, business not being congenial to his knightly mind, with a needful interval of exclusive devotion to billiards, cards, and boating, he had elected to study engineering under an eminent firm in Westminster. He was professedly still their pupil; but as obliging aunts and uncles were continually dying and leaving him little legacies of from £3000 to £10,000 at a time, and as he would eventually come in for a very large fortune, he took his pleasure as a true gentleman should, and in doing this he managed to make other "true gentlemen" too of his fellow-pupils. This new friendship accounted for a very much increased love of boating flannels in my old chum Smith, and a great fluency in river-side vocabulary and cultivation of the ideals aspired to by dandy amateur boatmen, all of which he luxuriated in as he lounged about on a summer morning, tiring out my patience when I was hard at work by repeating the assurance that it would do me a world of good to come out for a little "spin."

Smith one day brought his splendid friend, who was well featured in a way, and grandly dressed. He made the greatest show of open heartedness, and was overflowing with professions of admiration and desire for my friendship, so that I felt disarmed of every captious reservation. He was glad I boated at times, and hoped that I would often come out with him and try his outrigger, a cranky one that made him laugh now when he thought of the duckings it had given many too self-confident greenhorns. Individuality of view he proclaimed on many general subjects. Poetry, he declared, in modern days did not exist. What could be more unpoetic than the jingle of counted rhymes? Painting, on the other hand, with the glorious vista that our school was making for it, was quite a different thing. "We have indeed a grand prospect in that"; and the "We" was quite royal. He enlarged on all his achievements, laughing very much at the disconcertment of the "*governor*" and of the heads of the different establishments he had been in, and on his disregard of their admonition as to his mad pranks. An invitation followed to come over to Clapham two hours early for dinner, for practise during daylight in his garden with duelling pistols of exquisite make. To an intending traveller like myself the exercise was appropriate enough, but it was not thoroughly approved by the fidgety neighbours. So far the new friend had been amusing enough, and when, at the very beginning of the summer, he wrote from Margate saying that he had hired a fishing boat to cruise about in the channel, "just for the fun of the thing," and that he wanted me to be of the party, if I did not mind roughing it, I was tempted to accept; but where was the money to come from for my passage to and from the coast? While deliberating on "that eternal want of pence," I espied a copy of a National Gallery picture against the wall, and it struck me that I might persuade some representative of the Medici to give me a few pounds for it. In all my previous straits I had proudly avoided their benevolence as a source of relief, but this moment seemed

an occasion for the new experience. I took the canvas thereupon under my arm and walked off, calling at all houses with the distinctive coat-of-arms. My memory of the experiment leads me to recommend the process as an extremely salutary one for any young painter whose experience is only of the appreciation of near friends. I had thought that a painting should be seen strictly from a front point of view; not so did the Medici; every other point of sight but the central one did they prefer, until, looking along it when extended as a tennis racket in one hand, they passed it back, without inquiry as to price, declaring that *the article was not in their line*. Eventually in the Borough, with abated pride, I felt quite dishonest at closing with a rash admirer who advanced 8s. 6d. for the custody of the despised thing, and with but little more I at once took flight to "the Sea, the Sea, the open Sea." It would be outside my theme to tell the adventures of the journey, but they were amusing enough to make the intimacy between myself and Warwick more unreserved.

On my return, while advancing with "The Two Gentlemen of Verona," I was surprised by a visit from Smith, so absorbed had he been of late by his new friend; he did not hesitate for long, but soon explained his errand. "Look here, old boy! Warwick is worried about the lawyers' delay in paying him a large legacy left by a rich old relative, they have made all manner of preposterous delays in the business only to swell their accounts, and as it ought to have been settled months ago, he has not made provision for the present hitch, so that he is actually in need of pocket-money. Of course he could draw on the Union Bank, but he has reasons for not lowering his balance, he could even *sell out*, but the matter will be settled this week, and he has asked me for five pounds just for a day or two, and I should be sorry not to oblige him, so I want you, like a good fellow, to lend it to me." It would have seemed brutal to refuse, but I asked him if he was quite sure of the facts, and his

reply was, "As if I didn't know!" So I took out the sum from my diminishing store, urging him not to allow Warwick to forget to return it within a few weeks at most, and worked on unsuspectingly.

In another ten days Warwick came to see me, radiant with affection. "My dear steadfast old Apelles, all the devils in limbo have been worrying me out of my life, or I should have been long ago to see you. How you have got on! My soul! what a picture. Won't this knock the breath out of the crew in Trafalgar Square, and here have I been wasting my life in lawyers' offices first here, then there, Chancery Lane, Doctors Commons, until at times I have wished there were no fortune at all coming to me. Ah! but really you are to be envied. I always say that no money is so sweet as that worked for, and I know lots of rich people who all say the same thing. Experience is the true teacher, and I tell you, confidentially, I have been having some absurdly bitter annoyances just now. The governor is indignant. I wouldn't for the world go to him, and I don't want strangers to understand, you know. Smith has been such a trump! I told him, and, by Jove, the next day he stumped up five pounds just for pocket-money. I know it was deuced hard for him. I wouldn't ask him again, and so I've come to you for fifteen pounds just for a day or two. My legacy must be paid now in eight days, and then I can let you have hundreds beyond my debt, if you like."

I confess the request disturbed me. I decided upon candour. "Warwick," I began, "that desk in the corner is my bank; it still has in it thirty pounds. For paying models, my framemaker, and the rent it will last me to the end of my task, and leave perhaps one or two pounds over for my pocket. If you took fifteen pounds out of it, and you did not return the amount five weeks before the sending-in day, I should be obliged to stop work, and should lose not the five weeks only, but all the cream of my back year's labour. If you can't be *certain* to bring the money again in three weeks, you ought not to

ask me for it, *if you can be quite certain* you shall have it."

"Three weeks! In less than ten days you shall have it. Why, how can you doubt that I would sell every stick in my house rather than you should be kept an hour beyond the date I fix."

Then I counted out the sovereigns. They shone more peerlessly than gold had ever appeared before, for they signified freedom to finish my picture, and he went away boisterously happy, which I responded to but feebly, although I quite hoped the best. Ten days were told off by me. Neither Warwick nor letter came. Three weeks wound themselves off the roll of time without the much-needed repayment, and then I wrote to my gorgeous friend telling him of my astonishment; still there was no answer. I had to put off models and paint only still life.

Smith of course had no money, and now had no confidence about the termination of the legacy business. I was in desperation, but one sunny morning when, after a sleepless night, I was staring at my canvas, which looked like a half-arranged puzzle for which the further pieces could not be found, Warwick mounted the stairs and burst into the room. He was rich in expressions of contrition, but declared now that he had come to pay me. "It was the lawyers' fault," but when I reminded him of the terms of his promise, "Oh yes, it is truly disgraceful, but you know from one half-hour to the other I was always told the affair would be finished."

"Well then," I said, "give me the money and let me write to my models at once."

"All right, you have truly obliged me," but he went on talking until I had to explain that lost time had to be made up, and I must be left to work alone.

"Well, put on your hat and come with me."

"Come where?"

"Come to the city."

"But I can't; I must not leave my work."

"Oh, it won't take an hour; we'll go by the steamboat,

and you can come back at once ; otherwise I can't give it you." This decided me.

At Temple Bar he turned into a confectioner's, and there supplied himself with pen and ink and wrote what seemed like a cheque. Turning it over to me he said, "You'll have to endorse this." Uplifting it I read, "I promise to pay three months after date sixty pounds, etc., etc." When I glared at Warwick he was perfectly self-possessed, and to my inquiry he returned, "The simplest thing in the world, my dear boy ; it would never do for me to raise the wind for fifteen pounds. Don't you see how unreasonable you are? Smith doesn't bother me like this. You want the money, and I'm willing to oblige you. You'll get that bill cashed, and I can hand you the fifteen pounds, and you can go back to Chelsea at once. It is to save time for *you*. It's hard upon me, for I have an appointment in the City."

It was clear that he had me in his clutches, and there was no one to save me. If I tore up the bill I should return home, as it seemed ruined; if I cashed it there might be ruin still, but not for three months. "Where am I to take the accursed thing?" I asked.

"Oh, Solomon, an old rogue in Chancery Lane, will do it. He has made thousands out of me."

I went to the narrow windowed, misery begrimed house, up a steep staircase to the second floor, where stood a *posse* of shabby men. Surveying these for a few moments while I waited, I heard a door opened, and from a room behind came a short, bloated, dirty, satin waistcoated Jew of about forty. "Wha' d'ye-want?" said he as he snatched paper after paper out of the hands of the company. I followed him into the office, where sat clerks behind a screen. "What d'ye-com'-for?" he said to me.

"I've brought a *promise to pay* from Mr. Warwick, whom you know."

"Don'-know-'im. Shixty pounds," and, turning the paper over, he asked, "What is dis name?"

"It is mine. I've endorsed it," I replied.

"Whad-ar-you?"

"An artist."

"Ged some other name," and he smartly gave the bill back, and turned to a further client. Returning to the confectioner's I found Warwick, furious at the *ingratitude* of the man. Resignedly, he took the bill from me, put it in his pocket-book and told me not to mind, he would come with the money before the day was out.

In the evening my father came to see me, being anxious to know how my chance of completing the picture stood. I avowed all my folly to him, and declared uncertainty as to the possibility of getting done in any way for the Exhibition. He had too many difficulties himself then to spare money help, but he gave me advice which was worth more than money. "Do not ever count upon getting back Mr. Warwick's debt. He has no legacy coming to him, I feel sure. Your object now should be to recover that bill, otherwise he will negotiate it for something, and at the end of the term the holder will come upon you for the full sixty pounds, which they will soon make mount up to whatever in any way you might be sold up for." Then I saw that my trouble of yesterday had been made ten times worse to-day, and I set to work at a persistent badgering of Warwick by letter ; at first this seemed to be in vain, but eventually, on opening an envelope, I breathed what seemed sweet peace again at finding the "kite" enclosed, with many feeling reproaches at my mistrust of the intended flyer.

The fifteen pounds I never recovered, but I heard of the great descendant of the King-maker working an invention for an improved system of snuffing candles, another for a new form of advertising, and pursuing any wild scheme for making a lucky coup, particularly in West End gambling hells. As all these failed, he professed engineering, went to Australia to manage a mine, whose reports henceforth were of the most promising kind, till the shareholders in time grew dissatisfied and superseded him, and then he became lost to public history. Yet

Smith for a few years told dreadful stories he had heard of him, adding that his end might have been foreseen.

How I managed to bring the picture to a conclusion it would be difficult to explain. I only know that I determined not to yield to my evil star, and with the aid of an idler, for whose services I had to pay dearly in the end, who sat to me for the figure of Proteus, I managed to get my picture done and delivered at the Academy in due time.

My content was marred because of the shifts I had been obliged to make, through Warwick's dishonesty, to find opportunities for finishing it. Perhaps a fevered sensitiveness made me see these out of due balance. At least this was my hope after I had read the generous letter which here follows from Ford Madox Brown. I had left my easel for an hour to see Millais' pictures, and in the interval Brown had arrived and had persuaded my landlady to allow him to go up and see my work. The personal compliment in this letter would have been a reason for hesitation in publishing it, but the evidence it contains, bearing upon the relative position of the members of our little circle at the time, makes it too important to be suppressed.

17 Newman Street.

My dear Hunt—I could not pass this evening in peace if I did not write to tell you how noble I think your picture. I went up to see it after some resistance on the part of your landlady. I can scarcely describe the emotions I felt on finding myself alone with your beautiful work (quite finished and you out, *that* was something of a triumph), but certainly your picture makes me feel shame that I have not done more in all the years I have worked. You will now have one long course of triumph, I believe—well you deserve it. Your picture seems to me without fault and beautiful to its minutest detail, and I do not think that there is a man in England that could do a finer work; it is fine all over. I have been to see Millais. His pictures are wonders in colour and truth; in fine, admirable for all they intend, but I like yours better for my own use, although there are qualities in Millais which never have been attained, and perhaps never again

will be. If Rossetti will only work, you will form a trio which will play a great part in English art, in spite of Egg's predictions. I mean to be much more careful in future, and try next time to *satisfy myself*. I wish I had seen you to-night, for I am full of your picture, and should like to shake you by the hand. I have had serious thoughts of joining (*sic*) P.R.B. on my pictures this year, but in the first place I am rather old to play the fool, or at least what would be thought to be doing so; in the next place I do not feel confident enough how the picture will look, and unless very much liked I would not do it; but the best reason against it is that we may be of more service to each other as we are than openly bound together. I wish you all the success you deserve.—Yours sincerely, Ford M. Brown.